DAVID FYI

Ty:

I hope you had a fruitful meeting with Peter. I'll look forward to hearing from you.

David called this morning with a few requests:

1. He says he left the Reverse Angle Productions materials at Mayumi's, including materials which should be distributed to the board, and hopes you can see that the other board members get it.

2. He got another call from Byrd, but just told them that we haven't made any decisions yet. He needs to discuss this with you.

3. He has prepared a memo arguing that we should ramp up as soon as possible (he says we're dead if we can't get an issue out before summer, which I think you and I agree with). He says that the memo will be coming to us this a.m. Perhaps you will have it by the time you get this.

4. He asked me to elaborate for you and him on the statement I made last week that I think Marin Community Foundation is a long shot. I'll do that below.

   Please note: I don't want to throw a wet blanket on any efforts that have energy and hope behind them. I may be wrong (it's happened before). I certainly think that some probing via Susan, esp. if she knows how to get access to the MCF board, is worth doing, in case I am wrong. But, if you want my best guess, here's why I think it's a long shot:

   A. MCF's charge is to help the residents of Marin County, esp. the needy. From their application guidelines: "Projects with a regional or multi-county benefit may be funded only in proportion to the extent that they benefit the Marin County community."

      We can try to make a case for Point's being a county treasure that needs to be supported. But it's a bit of a stretch. Art Mills carried our last proposal with enthusiasm, but honestly didn't know if the board would consider Point as fitting within those guidelines. The fact that they did is a good sign. But a $26,000 grant is a whole lot different from a million-dollar endowment.

   B. MCF grants are very public and very political. Much of the board is appointed to represent particular constituencies, such as the Board of Supervisors and the Marin Interfaith Council.

The foundation considers itself to be under constant scrutiny, particularly from county officials, who want MCF to take over big pieces of the county's social welfare costs. They feel they need to justify large expenditures. If we could go to them with support from county political heavyweights, that would be one thing. Writers and artists are a different matter, I would guess.

C. It's my impression that their awards are very competitive, not that the foundation is sitting on piles of money it doesn't know what to do with. They are faced with (and have partially responded to) big proposals with direct Marin County projects: build and finance a new year-round homeless shelter; finance a drop-in center for teens; provide big funding for Dominican College, San Francisco Seminary, the Marin Symphony, other well-known institutions. But I have to hope/assume that Susan talks with different people than I do, and that she has closer contacts. If she says they don't know what to do with the money they have, maybe she's right.

D. We already have a grant from them that we have yet to perform on, and in fact we have already had to ask twice for extensions (once because they took so long to award the grant, once because of our own hiatus). Most foundations won't provide follow-up funding until they see how an organization performs on smaller grants.

   Some people there remember a grant Point was given a few years ago to develop the library for public use. It's my impression that Point took that money and never fulfilled the terms of the grant. I assume that could be an issue if we asked them for a large endowment.

E. We have to trust that Susan knows that it is possible to go straight to the board and circumvent the staff, though I wonder what she would think of someone trying to go around her to the Columbia Foundation board. MCF has an involved staff-centered granting process, which has been tightened up over the last year. It used to be that a single program officer could take proposals to the board. Now program officers have to take proposals to a second approval layer consisting of the other program officers before even they can go to the board.

   Stephen Dobbs is a strong I'm-in-control executive director. MCF can lay a pretty heavy hand on its grantees. He might not take too well to being bypassed, if he thought that was what was happening.

All right. This is all from my observations, from a distance. Susan has the ties to the fund-raising community, and I don't. If she has good reasons to think we have a solid shot here, then by all means use the entree she has to Grace Hughes or whoever, and do some exploring. As I said above, I

could be wrong (I would be delighted to be wrong about this). But I wouldn't expend large efforts on this before knowing more, or focus immediate time there to the exclusion of what feel like higher-percentage targets. And I wouldn't keep the location in Marin just for this opportunity, unless I had heard something very encouraging directly from MCF.

I don't like being a nay-sayer. By all means, let's check this one out. But I wouldn't commit a lot of efforts to going around gathering endorsements, for instance, before getting a good signal we can really help ourselves that way.

Mike
9/9/96